

REMARKS

The above amendment and these remarks are responsive to the Office Action of Examiner Gerald J. O'Connor, mailed 7 Jan 2005.

Claims 1-3 and 15, and 17-21 are in the case, none being allowed.

35 U.S.C. 101

Claims 1-3, 20, and 21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 as directed to non-statutory subject matter.

Applicants have amended these claims as suggested by the Examiner to clarify that the "system" of the claims is, in each instance, a "computer system", thus tying claims 1-3, 20 and 21 to technological art.

Claims 14, 16, 22, and 23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 as directed to non-statutory subject matter.

END920000105US1

11

S/N 09/657,216

Applicants have canceled these claims without prejudice in order to narrow the issues and, hopefully, facilitate prosecution of the application to allowance.

Claims 15 and 17-19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 as directed to non-statutory subject matter.

Applicants have amended these claims to read directly on a computer readable medium on which is recorded program instructions for controlling the operation of a computer system and computer terminal and which, applicants contend, is statutory subject matter.

35 U.S.C. 103

Claim 1-3 and 14-23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Gardner et al. (US 5,758,327).

Applicants have canceled claims 14, 16, and 22-23 without prejudice to narrow the issues.

END920000105US1

12

S/N 09/657,216

Applicants invention involves the loading of commodity codes and charts of accounts, and expands on that concept in ways not taught by Gardner et al.

These are presented to a user in a specific sequence that enhances the accuracy and simplifies the process for entering a requisition.

Applicants provide administrators the ability to connect commodity codes with a subset of the accounting codes, as appropriate for the business and country. In this way, a requester or requisitioner ordering an item that is not found in a catalog can still submit a requisition with complete and accurate accounting information. This concept is at the core of applicants' invention, which is front-end business logic and validation. It isn't enough to just load the commodity codes and charts of accounts. The requester needs to be provided a method by which he would be able to enter valid accounting data without a painful process of trial and error. There are hundreds of accounting codes in applicants' chart of accounts. By giving an administrator the ability to link a handful ("selects from req/cat system database valid accounts with descriptions for a given commodity...") of these codes with a given commodity code,

END920000105US1

13

S/N 09/657,216

and furthermore to provide a meaningful description of the accounting code, applicants have enhanced the shopping experience for the end user, whether he is ordering from a catalog or not. Once a commodity code is selected, whether from the catalog or by commodity description only, the user then has a short list of just a few account codes (those selected by the administrator), along with a description of when each should be used, for selection.

In this way, applicants have ensured that requisitions being sent for approvals are not rejected due to invalid accounting codes, and requisitions that are approved and sent to the processing system (ERP) also do not fail validation upon automated entry.

This process is explained in applicants' specification, as follows:

Thus, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, a method is provided for creating a valid chart of accounts from which an administrator 184 can facilitate and enable a requisitioner to select a valid general ledger account. First, there is push from an enterprise (erp) system a chart of accounts 140

END920000105US1

14

S/N 09/657,216

with descriptions to a req/cat system database. The administrator selects from req/cat system database valid accounts with descriptions for a given commodity and purchase time period, and then pushes the selected account/description tuple to the company commodity groups, thus completing the setup of the commodity documents 150 to be used in the requisition creation process. A company commodity document 150 created by administrator 184 may include for each commodity code under each company, commodity code 152, which is a very broad category [sic], short description 190, long description 191 (from procurement organization 182), key words 192, approvers 193, financial information 194 (including purchase type 198, and general ledger account 199), route-to buyer 195 (by plant association), preferred supplier 196 (which associates the commodity code to a catalog 158), and special handling code 197 (with drop list including, for example, skills matching, obi, administrative services) -- all used to drive the customer to the correct commodity."

"To create a requisition, a user searches against commodities and catalogs in commodity description

END920000105US1

15

S/N 09/657,216

documents 150, which may be Notes documents or DB2 records, and creates one or more line items. These searches may be done by catalog and non-catalog, and driven based on descriptions entered by requester. A hierarchy of families may be provided as an alternative search approach. The requisitioner initiates a proceed to accounting process, which displays line items which may be selected by requisitioner; and then displays a financial worksheet created by a Java agent with fields which need to be selected or populated by the requisitioner from the company commodity document, based on purchase type, and which presents valid general ledger accounts numbers and descriptions to the requisitioner." (Specification, page 30, line 3 to page 31, line 17.)

Applicants' specifically recite that the description maps account codes selected by the administrator to a given commodity code from an associated accounting system for use by a requester to select the correct general ledger account when doing financial validation on a requisition for commodities. The independent claims in the case are limited to the requirement that upon the requisitioner selecting a commodity from a commodity description document and

END920000105US1

16

S/N 09/657,216

initiating a proceed to accounting process, the requisitioner is presented with a financial worksheet which presents valid general ledger accounts numbers and descriptions for selection by the requisitioner.

With respect to this concept, the Examiner states:

"Gardner et al. do not specifically disclose that the chart of accounts includes descriptions, nor that the valid accounts have a limited purchase period, nor presenting to the requisitioner a financial worksheet with valid general ledger account numbers and descriptions for selection by the requisitioner."

(Office Action, page 5.)

The Examiner then continues:

"However, descriptions and valid periods (such as a name of the account and a particular valid fiscal year) for accounts are well known, hence obvious, elements to include in any system of requisitioning accounting so that the users know for what purpose each account is intended, or, in other words, providing a "mapping" or concordance between valid account

END920000105US1

17

S/N 09/657,216

codes/numbers and particular corresponding commodities/codes."

"Likewise, presenting accounting data comprising charts of accounts in the form of a financial worksheet with valid general ledger account numbers and descriptions for selection by the requisitioner, is certainly well known, hence obvious, step to follow in the field of accounting.

"Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, to have modified the method of Gardner et al., so as to include account descriptions and periods, as is well known to do, in order to facilitate selection of the proper account to which to charge a particular requisition, and to present to the requisitioner a financial worksheet with valid general ledger account numbers and descriptions for selection by the requisitioner, as is also well known to do, doing so simply as a matter of design choice, since making such modifications could be performed readily and easily by any person of ordinary skill in the art, with neither undue experimentation, nor risk of

END920000105US1

18

S/N 09/657,216

unexpected results." (Office Action, pages 5-6.)

Applicants respectfully traverse this conclusion, which is apparently based (implicitly) on the Examiner's personal knowledge, or else draws on applicants' own disclosure.

Applicants argue that it is not merely the presentation of descriptions of each commodity code that is being claimed, but rather the circumstances under which those descriptions are presented and used. As claimed, the commodity code descriptions are presented in a financial worksheet responsive to a requisitioner initiating a proceed to accounting process. This accounting process is initiated after the requisitioner has selected the commodity from a commodity description document presenting the commodity codes. After initiating the proceed to accounting process, the requisitioner is then presented a financial worksheet with valid general ledger accounts numbers and descriptions for selection by said requisitioner.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection of claims 1-3 and 15-21. However, if the Examiner maintains this rejection, Applicants again and respectfully request that the Examiner provide an affidavit attesting to this statement pursuant to 37 CFR 1.104(d)(2).

END920000105US1

19

S/N 09/657,216

With respect to claims 3, 17, and 19-23, the Examiner observes that Gardner et al. "do not disclose the recited details of the descriptions of each commodity codes", but then asserts that "the recited elements of the commodity code descriptions are all well known, hence obvious, elements to use in any commodity code description." (Office Action, page 14).

Applicants have canceled claims 22-23, and traverse the Examiner's conclusion with respect to claims 3, 17, and 19-20, which is apparently based on the Examiner's personal knowledge (Official Notice), or else draws on applicants' own disclosure to teach the core concepts of the invention without reference to a specific art reference.

Applicants argue that it is not merely the presentation of descriptions of each commodity code that is being claimed, but rather the circumstances under which those descriptions are presented and used. As claimed, the commodity code descriptions are presented in a financial worksheet responsive to a requisitioner initiating a proceed to accounting process. This accounting process is initiated after the requisitioner has selected the commodity from a

END920000105US1

20

S/N 09/657,216

commodity description document presenting the commodity codes. After initiating the proceed to accounting process, the requisitioner is then presented a financial worksheet with valid general ledger accounts numbers and descriptions for selection by said requisitioner.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-3 and 15-21. However, if the Examiner maintains this rejection, Applicants again respectfully request that the Examiner provide an affidavit attesting to this statement pursuant to 37 CFR 1.104(d)(2).

With respect to claims 2, 16, and 18, claim 16 has been canceled, and claims 2 and 18 are dependent upon claims 1 and 15, respectively, and are distinguished from Gardner as previously discussed.

In essence, the rejection of claims 1-3 based on Gardner, et al. represents hindsight reconstruction of Gardner, et al. based on applicants' own disclosure, and thus does not satisfy the requirements for the prima facie case which the Examiner must provide.

Applicants urge that claims 1-3 and 15-21 be allowed.

END920000105US1

21

S/N 09/657,216

Admitted Prior Art

While discussing the issue of admitted prior art (APA) in the section "Response to Arguments", the Examiner has not specifically asserted APA in any rejection of the claims currently in the case. Consequently, applicants conclude that the issue is moot.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants urge that the above amendments be entered and the case passed to issue with claims 1-3 and 15-21.

The Application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action by the Examiner is urged. Should differences remain, however, which do not place one/more of the remaining claims in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to phone the undersigned at the number provided below for the purpose of providing constructive assistance and suggestions in accordance with M.P.E.P. Sections 707.02(j) and 707.03 in order that allowable claims

END920000105US1

22

S/N 09/657,216

can be presented, thereby placing the Application in condition for allowance without further proceedings being necessary.

Sincerely,

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END920000105US1

23

S/N 09/657,216